

MONTANA UPDATE

Montana Department of Commerce

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Big Sky on the Big Screen Passes

After a long gestation period in the Montana Legislature, the Big Sky on the Big Screen Act (HB 584, Harris) passed the legislature. On April 20th, the bill passed the third and final reading in both the House and the Senate. At this time, the bill is awaiting Governor Schweitzer's signature.

The bill will provide production companies filming in Montana a 12% incentive based on hired Montana labor, as well as an 8% incentive on qualified expenditures. Qualified in-state expenditures consist of hotel and lodging, production equipment rental fuel costs, expendables, lumber/construction materials, vehicle rentals, and food expenditures. All eligible purchases and rentals must occur in Montana.

Betsy Baumgart, Montana Promotion Division Administrator stated, "This bill had an unprecedented amount of grassroots support from our partners in the tourism and film industries, and you should all be congratulated for your efforts." This legislation will have a direct and positive impact on Montana's economy including job creation, retail sales and lodging.



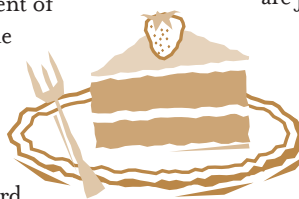
Sten Iversen, manager of the Montana Film Office, reported its passage will bring more films, commercials, TV and documentary work to the state, and that, in turn, will provide jobs for Montana's freelance film crews and Montana university graduates. Along with no sales tax, a great crew base and

phenomenal locations, Montana is once again on its way to becoming a premier location for filmmakers.

Restaurant Competition to Feature MT Products

The Montana Department of Agriculture is planning the 2nd Annual Montana Restaurant Connection & Chef Competition, a chef competition for the Culinary Excellence Award on September 12, 2005. Chefs from around the state will converge upon Big Sky, MT, touting recipes featuring Montana products.

To increase offerings of Montana products in restaurants statewide, Montana chefs will be invited to submit recipes featuring Montana products. The recipes will be reviewed, with 15 chosen as finalists. These chefs will be invited to participate in the final competition in Big Sky. Local and national chefs and restaurant industry professionals will judge the recipes on originality, flavor and taste, as well as creative use of Montana products. The 2004 Montana Culinary Excellence Award Recipes are currently available at www.visitmt.com/virtualvisitor/recipes.htm. For more information on the competition, visit www.agr.mt.gov or contact the Montana Department of Agriculture at agr@mt.gov or 406-444-2402.



SATW in Montana

Travel Montana, Glacier Country and the Missoula CVB have joined efforts to host the Society of American Travel Writers (SATW) Freelance Council Meeting in Missoula, July 1-4, 2005. The event, limited

to 40 members, is loaded with activities and tours that will generate many stories about Montana. Horseback riding, fishing, rafting the Alberton Gorge, checking out Missoula's attractions, touring the National Bison Range, exploring the birding trails of the Bitterroot and attending the Arlee Powwow are just a few of the offerings during the

core meeting. In addition, there are a total of 10 pre- and post-trip add-ons throughout the state, hosted by the regions and CVBs. Check out the website at www.missoulacvb.org/satw for further details. Anyone wishing to help with sponsorships in exchange for publicity on your business, can contact Barb Neilan at the Missoula CVB at director@missoulacvb.org or 406-532-3250.

2005 TIIP Grant Application Materials Available

The 2005 Tourism Infrastructure Investment Program (TIIP) application materials are now available on Travel Montana's intranet site: www.travelmontana.state.mt.us/newsandupdates/appsformshome.shtm.

TIIP invests a portion of Travel Montana's "bed tax" funding into new tourism-related infrastructure products, the enhancement of existing tourism facilities and the preservation of Montana's historical and cultural treasures. Since its creation in 1995, TIIP has invested more than \$2 million in "bed tax" funds into 44 projects in 32 communities across Montana. This investment has helped create over \$24 million in new or improved tourism facilities in Montana.

The 2005 TIIP Grant Pool amount will be announced in June, but is likely to be \$200,000 with an application deadline of August 1, 2005. If you need more

information or application materials, contact Victor Bjornberg, Travel Montana Tourism Development Coordinator at victor@visitmt.com or 406-841-2795.

Press CD Wins Gold

Travel Montana's Interactive CD-ROM press kit received a Gold Horizon Interactive Award for interactive media in the self promotion/company identity award category. The Horizon Interactive Awards are a prestigious international competition recognizing outstanding achievement among interactive media producers—showcasing the best interactive digital media developed by creative media producers internationally. Donnie Sexton of Travel Montana collaborated with multimedia producer Earthtalk Studios in Bozeman, MT, on the design and development of the CD-ROM. For more information on this CD, please contact Donnie Sexton at donnie@visitmt.com or 406-841-2897.

Montana Dinosaur Trail Web Portal Live

Set your online travel itinerary for www.mtdinotrail.org to find out all the things to do and see along Montana's Dinosaur Trail. The trail's Web Portal is now live and ready for use. The 13 trail facilities are featured on the portal along with visitor services and other attractions available in their communities. Anyone interested is encouraged to set up a link to the portal on their website.

Funding and coordination for the Montana Dinosaur Trail Web Portal and brochure has come from Custer, Missouri River, Russell

and Yellowstone Countries, Bozeman CVB, Parks Division of MT Fish, Wildlife & Parks, Malta Chamber of Commerce, Montana BLM and Montana Commerce Department's Travel Montana program.

VICs Open

May marks the opening of Travel Montana's nine state-supported visitor information centers (VICs). The VICs are located in the gateway communities of Culbertson, Broadus, Dillon, Hardin, Shelby, St. Regis, West Yellowstone, Lolo Pass and Wibaux.

A new feature being installed in each of the VICs this summer is WiFi. WiFi, or Wireless Fidelity, will allow visitors to connect to the Internet from anywhere within the VICs using their personal wireless-enabled laptops. The service is scheduled to be available in all nine centers by June.

For information on the VIC program, contact Carol Crockett at ccrockett@mt.gov or 406-841-2796.

Affordable Meetings Mid-America

Marlee Iverson of Travel Montana and Cyndy Andrus of the Bozeman CVB recently attended HSMAT's Affordable Meetings Mid-America in Chicago, IL. The two-day show generated interest in Montana and those leads are available at www.travelmontana.state.mt.us/OURPROGRAMS/MeetingsConventions. If you have not received your password to access the leads, contact Marlee at miverson@mt.gov or 406-841-2895.

EXPLORE!



Explore the Big Sky

Immerse yourself in the traditional life ways at the Plains Indians Encampment in Fort Benton, June 10 – 12. In Great Falls, from June 29 – July 3, explore the Tribal Living History Encampment or watch and/or compete with Indian athletes during the Traditional Tribal Games. For more information, log on to www.explorethebigsky.com/events/indianculture.

MONTANA

Alternative accessible formats of this document will be provided to disabled persons on request.

Calendar of Events

May

- 3-7 TIA's International Pow Wow, New York City, NY
- 7-15 See America Week/Nat'l Tourism Week
- 15-17 Western States Tourism Policy Council, Reno, NV
- 24 Cruise and Tour Travel Expo, Minneapolis, MN

June

- 6-8 TAC meeting, Big Sky, MT
- 15-16 Affordable Meetings West, San Jose, CA

For all of the latest Montana tourism industry information log on to:
travelmontana.state.mt.us

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